



J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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November 17, 2006

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **STATUS REPORT – BOARD REQUESTED REVIEW OF FAILED
PROTOCOLS THAT DELAYED NOTIFICATION TO THE COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER OF A SEWAGE SPILL ON AUGUST
8, 2006**

On September 19, 2006, on a motion by Supervisor Knabe, the Board instructed my Office, in close consultation with the Public Health Commission, to report back on the failed protocols that delayed notification of the County Public Health Officer of the August 8, 2006 raw sewage spill onto County beaches. Your Board further instructed my Office to: 1) review existing County, State and other standards and procedures pertaining to the protection of the public's health and safety during sewage spills under both normal and disaster conditions; 2) recommend, in conjunction with County Counsel, improved enforcement methods, including criminal sanctions, and strengthened laws and regulations to apply when the County Public Health Officer is not immediately notified of a sewage spill; and 3) in consultation with interested environmental groups, review sewage spills from January 2002 through July 2006 to determine if all standards and procedures were followed, if public notices were posted without delay, if methods of communication, documentation and responses were sufficient, and whether all affected departments and agencies acted appropriately.

To date, Auditor-Controller staff have met with the Public Health Commission, County Counsel, representatives from County Counsel, Beaches and Harbors, Fire Department/Lifeguard Division, Department of Public Works, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, Culver City, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, and Los Angeles City Bureau of Sanitation. We also met with Santa Monica Baykeeper, an environmental group whose focus is environmental protection. We have reviewed a variety of reports relative to the spill on August 8, 2006 and have examined federal, State and County laws, regulations and procedures relating to water quality and the

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protection of the public, including recreational beach users. We also reviewed the County's procedures for responding to known sewage spills.

In order to complete a thorough analysis and vetting of the issues outlined in Supervisor Knabe's motion, and to prepare a report for your Board's consideration, additional time is needed. We plan to submit our report to your Board by February 1, 2007.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me, or your staff may contact DeWitt Roberts at (213) 974-8315 or at droberts@auditor.lacounty.gov.

JTM:DR:JMS

c: Public Health Commission
Chief Administrative Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel